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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR MARCH 31, 2005

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for March 31, 2005. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

EKSPRES / BOLGE: Jandarma General Commander Fevzi Turkeri paid a visit to Cahit Kirac, Adana Governor, and stated before their meeting that Jandarma's main aim was "to ensure security and protect the peace of (our) people".

BOLGE / EKSPRES: State Minister Ali Babacan, AKP's Group Chairmanship in the Turkish Parliament and AKP National Headquarters expressed and issued warnings separately to Adana AKP MP Abdullah Caliskan, upon Caliskan's negative comments regarding the status of the Turkish economy earlier last week (see 03/23 press summary).

BOLGE / EKSPRES: Pursuant to a stipulation in the Provincial Administration Law, Adana Governor Cahit Kirac can no longer hold the office of the Chairperson of the provincial assembly of Adana. According to the regulation, the Chairperson of the assembly shall be designated from among the assembly members. Consequently, Namik Kemal Urhan was designated as the new assembly Chairperson.

EKSPRES / BOLGE: Azim Ozturk, District Mayor of Seyhan, evaluated his one-year term in office at a press conference at the Seyhan Hotel in Adana. During his address to journalists, among other issues he conveyed, Ozturk said that his municipality did not manipulate the tendering process of Seyhan's Cleaning Services to benefit one firm. This was in response to Adana Mayor Aytac Durak's hints regarding corruption with the tender. Ozturk said that the bidding was perfectly legal and was open to fair competition.

OZGUR GUNDEM: The human shield volunteers, who had set off for Sirnak with the aim of ending the military operations in the Cudi Mountains, arrived at the Jandarma check point fifty kilometers from Cizre where it had to wait until seven o'clock in the morning on the grounds that the road was closed due to a traffic accident. The group was later stopped thirty kilometers from Cizre at the Katran Jandarma Station.

RADIKAL / EVRENSEL / OZGUR GUNDEM: Those charged with insulting the flag in Mersin reportedly may face six to eight years of imprisonment. The Mersin Prosecutor's summary states that the children were first taken to the Children's Branch of the Security Directorate. According to Ozgur Gundem, however, on the day of their arrest, the children were reportedly shown to the press as they were being brought to the Anti-Terror Branch.

EVRENSEL / OZGUR GUNDEM: A group comprising nearly a hundred and fifty people chanted slogans saying "We are all human shields", "The flag is not the property of chauvinists, the flag belongs to the people," in front of the Sirnak DEHAP (Democratic People's Party) Provincial Headquarters. DEHAP Provincial Chairperson said that the real problem in the (Turkish) country was the Kurdish problem rather than the flag.

CUMHURIYET / EKSPRES: Thirty-one CHP (Republican People's Party) deputies issued a joint press announcement and expressed strong disapproval of the recent dismissal of deputies, warnings issued against MPs, and unfair assignment of people to positions. CHP's Adana MP Ziya Yergok is among the MPs who signed the declaration.

EVRENSEL: It is feared that the gun attack in the Hazro district of Diyarbakir between the two families (see 03/23 press summary), killing one person in one family and wounding another person in the other one (district Mayor), may turn into a blood feud. Eighteen families, who took sides with the Mayor, allegedly had to move to Diyarbakir at the request of the Governor's Office.

RADIKAL: The Turkish government policy that offered high salaries to doctors to encourage them to work in the eastern and southeastern parts of Turkey turned out to be futile and did not draw more doctors to the Hakkari province. Known for terror-related problems, its low standard of living, and a lack of medical equipment in its hospitals, Hakkari's issues appear to have scared off medical personnel.

YENI SAFAK: The Mayor of Tatvan in Bitlis complained about the

frequent blackouts experienced due to worn-out power lines. The Mayor draws attention to the fact that the lines have not been renovated since 1980 and the existing facilities could only serve the needs of 20,000 people. Tatvan has a population of 100,000 however.

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